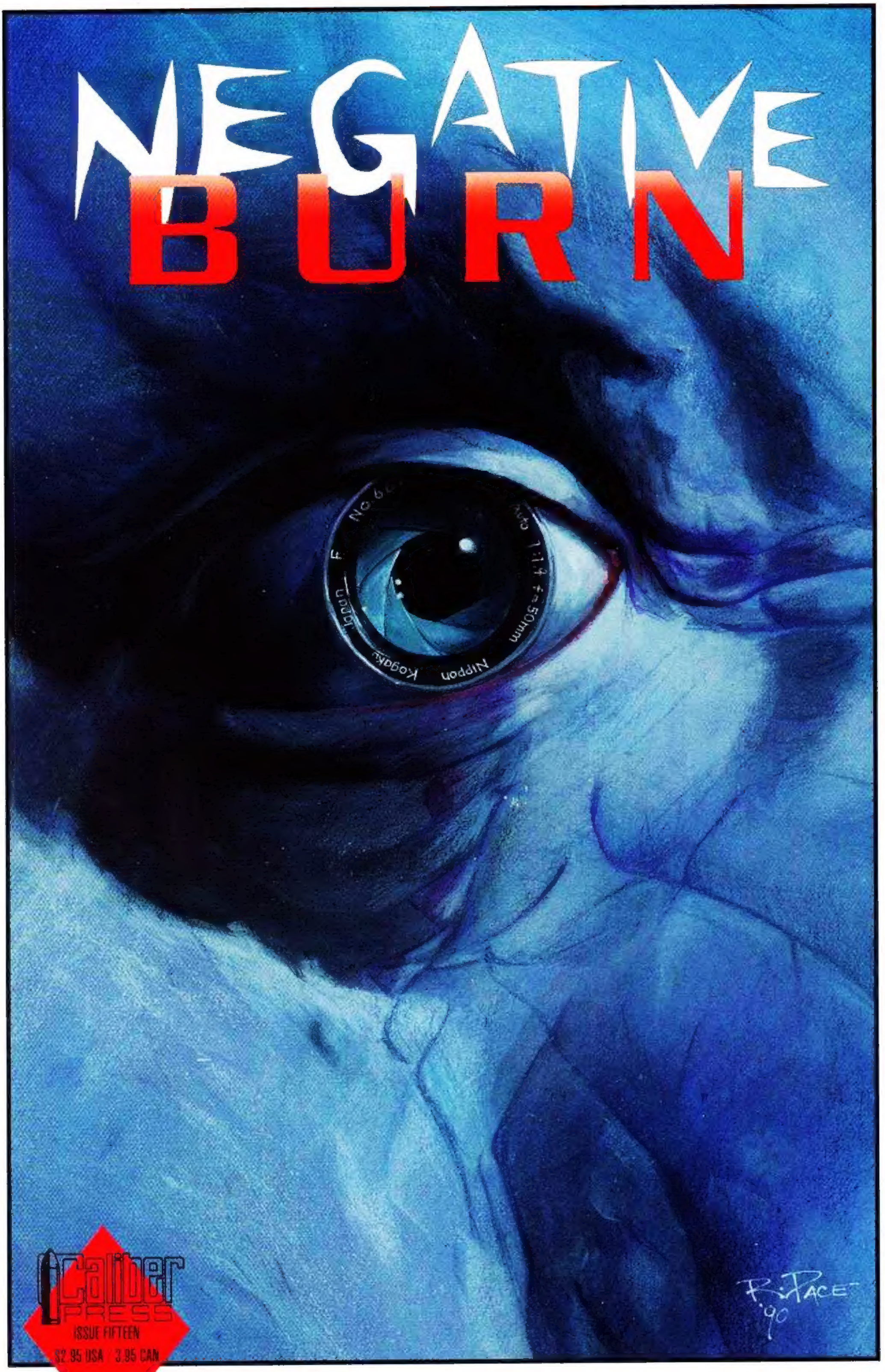
BRIAN BOLLAND ◆ J.CALFIORE ◆ BILL KOEB ◆ DAVE LOUAPRE ◆ ALAN MOORE ◆ JEFF NICHOLSON

NEGATIVE BURN



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ISSUE FIFTEEN

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CANTO 5: a mr.trianglehead vignette

by J.Colmore

SHE'S BACK—-

—AT LAST.

TX-15X35 ZOOM

GOD, SHE'S BEAUTIFUL.

I LOVE HER. I'VE ALWAYS LOVED HER.

SHE BRINGS BEAUTY INTO MY WORLD. FILLS MY DAYS AND NIGHTS——

——MY DREAMS

SHE GIVES ME PURPOSE.

DAMN--

--THAT WAS TOO SHORT TONIGHT. SHE MUST BE TIRED. DAMN.

THE NIGHTS SHE TAKES HER TIME ARE THE BEST.

SOMETIMES SHE STAYS THERE SO LONG --

--IT'S A REWARD FOR MY DEDICATION--

--MY COMMITMENT.

MY DAYS ARE SO EMPTY. I SLEEPWALK THROUGH THEM.

UNINSPIRED.

I SLEEP.

I EAT. I WORK.

I EAT AND SLEEP AGAIN.

DAY AFTER DAY.

THE ONLY TIME I TRULY FEEL ALIVE IS WHEN SHE'S THERE—

—WHEN I SEE HER.

SOMETIMES I WAIT AT MY WINDOW FOR HOURS BEFORE I SEE HER.

BUT I'M PATIENT.

LOVE HAS TO BE PATIENT.

I ALWAYS WONDER IF SHE KNOWS I'M HERE. CAN SHE FEEL ME WATCHING?

IS THIS TOO MUCH TO HOPE FOR—.

—THAT THIS IS FOR ME? SHE LINGERS SO LONG.

AND ONCE IN A WHILE, I COULD SWEAR SHE GLANCES UP.

AT ME.

CAN SHE KNOW?...

...I'M SILLY.

IT'S TOO BIG OF A WISH.

ON SATURDAY MORNINGS SHE TAKES A WALK—

---EARLY.

SO EARLY THERE'S ALMOST NO ONE ON THE STREET.

SHE WALKS EVERY SATURDAY. I KNOW HER SCHEDULE.

I KNOW THAT THIS IS MY CHANCE TO APPROACH HER. IT'S TAKEN ME SO LONG TO BUILD UP THE COURAGE—

I HAVE TO GO THROUGH WITH IT—

--NOW, BEFORE I LOSE MY NERVE.

BEFORE SHE GETS TOO FAR.

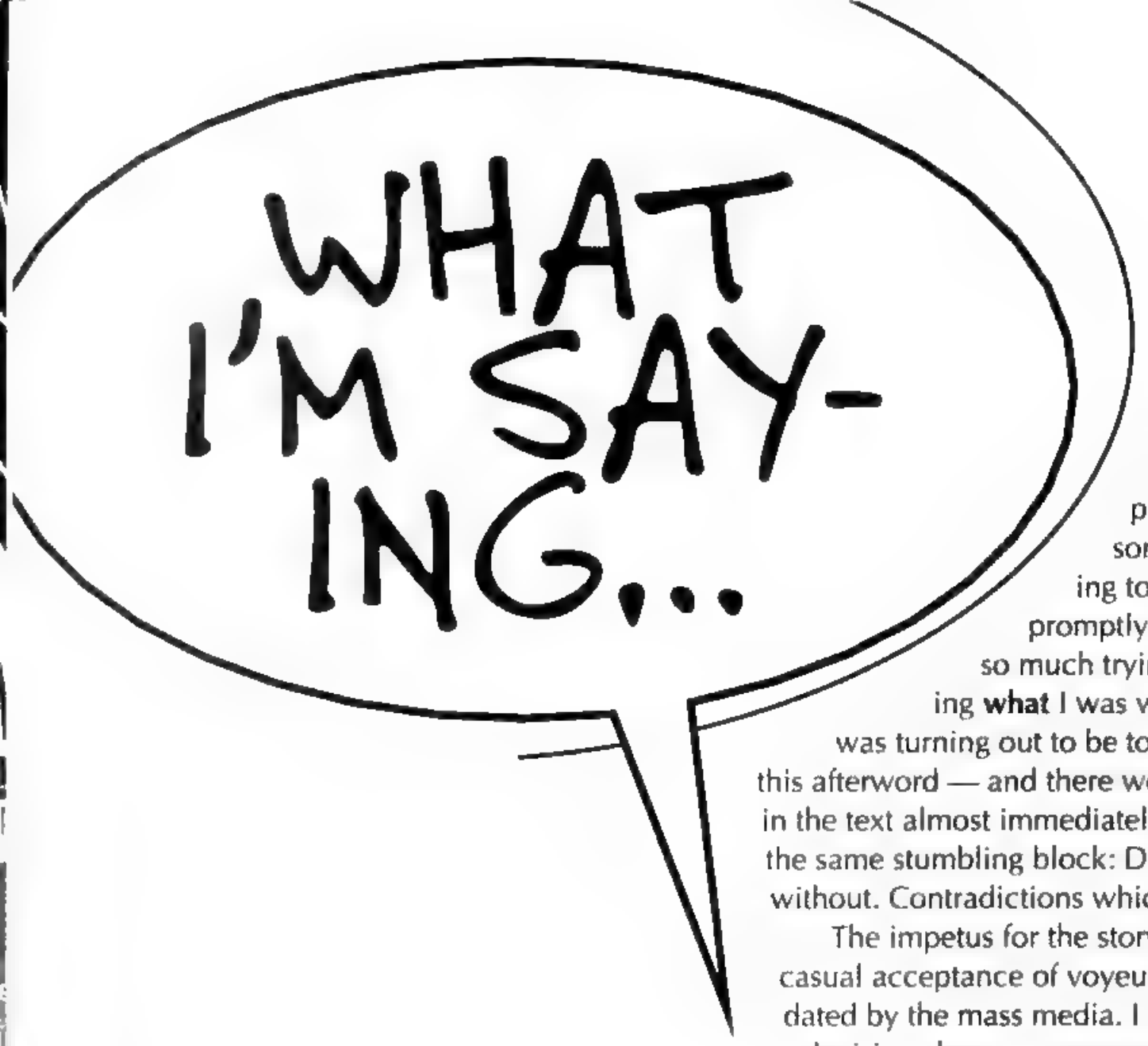
WAIT—

EXCUSE ME—.
—I'M SORRY, BUT I JUST WANTED TO TELL YOU—-
—-HOW BEAUTIFUL—-
—-I THINK YOU ARE.

AND I THINK--

--I LOVE-

--YOU.



J. Calafiore

Several months back when I pitched the story you've just finished, Joe Pruett asked me to add an afterword to be included with the publication of the piece. He wanted me to discuss my reasons for doing the story, and whit I was trying to say with it. Easy enough. I agreed, and promptly took three months to write this. It wasn't so much trying to find the time to write, as it was finding **what** I was writing about. The task Joe had set for me was turning out to be tougher than anticipated. Each attempt at this afterword — and there were more than a few —had bogged down in the text almost immediately. And each time I faltered it was across the same stumbling block: Dichotomy, both within the story as well as without. Contradictions which I couldn't seem to reconcile.

The impetus for the story was a bit of moral outrage over the casual acceptance of voyeurism, specifically peeping-tomism, validated by the mass media. I had lost track of the number of films and television shows, commercials and videos that portrayed the voyeur as hero, displaying pure and unconditional love, who in the end wins the object of his attention. (The voyeur is traditionally male.) This invasion of privacy has become acceptable, even commonplace. We like to watch.

In terms of, say, movies people are generally more comfortable with **Stakeout** than **Peeping Tom**.

My illustrated story doesn't quite cover the moral outrage. That it delved more into the psychology of the voyeur seemed to be the dichotomy—the dichotomy tripping me up in this analysis until I realized that I was misinterpreting it. This piece of art, not editorial. The idea, the spark is not the work; the art develops it's own direction in the act of doing. Writing out the script for the piece, choosing the voyeur's point of view, I was forced into a more personal analysis. I needed to get into his head. For the ending to have the impact it does, the focus had to be shifted to the apparent paradox between his emotional attachment and his actions.

However, the dichotomy within the piece is also an illusion. The contradiction between this love-from-afar and the finality of the murder is in reality no contradiction simply because there is no love. And that's the point: obsession is not love. It's a fact that we can possess nothing. Being cliché, everything is transitory, and in the end you really can't take it with you. It's called lack of control. On the one hand, few deal with this ineffectiveness well; on the other, few deal with so poorly. The story is an extreme, an all too real extreme. The frustration, the anger at the inability to control directed outward without the restraint that's taken for granted, fueled by the obsessive personality. It's easily argued that the lack of control is the spark-plug for the obsessive compulsive; where the failure to process that ineffectiveness is the catalyst for the manifestation of the obsessive behavior. There's too much psychology involved here, and there's too little space in which to explore it satisfactorily, but it all returns to the attempt to exert control. Everyone experiences it in one form or another, most with thankfully less than violent expression. Still, there's a need to understand:

Control is not love.
Infatuation is not love.
Jealousy is not love.
Obsession is not love.
Rape is not love. (It's not even sex.)

If you're asking how "rape" got into this, go back to the beginning and re-read. You've missed the point.

Why is so much of this directed towards women?

Why do the insecure choose blacks? Why do the paranoid choose Jews? Because the minority, or the perceived minority, has been set up for the fall. If there's any doubt, examine the mass media again. It validates baser values more often than loftier ones.

As a final note, although it appears that I'm laying blame at the feet of the mass media, I want to state flatly that I'm not. I'm simply reacting to it. The inescapable truth is that portrayals in the media are not the disease; they're symptoms. A cure—if ever administered—needs to be directed within not without as it is now, which is of course the ultimate in dichotomy.

MR. MAMOULIAN

MOVING THINGS ABOUT

18 BOLLAND 5.12.87

MY HOUSE IS FULL OF **STUFF**. THERE ISN'T A HORIZONTAL SURFACE THAT IS NOT PILED HIGH WITH **THINGS**.

IT'S NOT THAT I'M A GREAT COLLECTOR, IT'S JUST THAT I FEEL THAT ANY ONE OF THESE ITEMS MAY **BE** VERY USEFUL ONE DAY.

EVERY NOW AND THEN I DISCOVER AN URGENT NEED FOR SOMETHING I KNOW I HAVE KEPT IN A SAFE PLACE, READY FOR SUCH AN OCCASION.

I HAVE A REASONABLE IDEA THAT THE ITEM IS IN SUCH AND SUCH A PLACE. CALL THIS "PLACE A". THERE IS A PILE OF STUFF IN PLACE A. CALL THIS "PILE A". BUT THE ITEM IS NOT AMONGST IT.

I AM ANNOYED. MANY OF THE ITEMS IN PILE "A" DO NOT BELONG THERE BUT INSTEAD BELONG IN PLACES "B", "C", "D", AND SO ON.

SO I START TO MOVE THINGS ABOUT. ITEMS FROM PILE "A" WHICH BELONG IN PLACE "B" ARE TAKEN TO PLACE "B" WHERE I DISCOVER PILE "B" WHICH CONTAINS ITEMS WHICH HAVE STRAYED FROM OTHER PLACES.

THUS BEFORE I CAN DEAL WITH PILE "A" ITEMS FROM PILE "B" HAVE TO BE MOVED TO PLACES "C", "D", "E" ETC., AND IN EACH CASE THERE IS A PILE CONTAINING ITEMS WHICH OUGHT TO BE SOMEWHERE ELSE

A CHAIN REACTION HAS THEREFORE BEGUN WHICH WILL HAVE ME PACING BACK AND FORTH CARRYING THINGS AND PILING THEM IN PLACES WHICH ARE GROANING WITH THINGS THAT HAVE TO BE CARRIED TO OTHER PLACES.

DAYS PASS. EACH ITEM HAS TO BE EXAMINED AND CATAGORISED BEFORE IT CAN JOIN A PILE DUE TO BE MOVED TO ANOTHER PLACE. PILES GROW AND SHRINK, TAKE ON A LIFE OF THEIR OWN. THEY ARE IN CONTROL NOW.

THE ORIGINAL NEED FOR THAT ONE IMPORTANT ITEM IS NOW FORGOTTEN. I WILL NEVER FIND IT. MY MIND IS EMBROILED IN A COMPLEX MATHEMATICAL EQUASION OF SPACE, TIME, MOVEMENT AND VOLUME.

OUR TIME ON THIS PLANET IS BUT BRIEF, HARDLY MORE THAN A BLIP. FOR ME, MUCH OF THAT TIME IS SPENT....

MOVING THINGS ABOUT

THE INVINCIBLE MAN.

SCRIPT: COLIN CLAYTON & CHRIS DOWS.

ART: ART WETHERELL.

"THE SEVEN GODS OF LUCK SHOULD BE PLEASED WITH MY WORK TONIGHT..."

"SINCE THEY APPEARED TO ME, MY RITUAL SWORD HAS BEEN HARVESTING THE SOULS THEY CRAVE ALMOST EVERY NIGHT."

AKI SAKAMOTO SHOULD BE PROUD TO BE MY FIFTY-NINTH VICTIM - FOR NOW, I AM ON THE BRINK OF ETERNITY...

I AM NEARLY IMMORTAL.

"NOTHING CAN STOP ME."

"WHILE THE WAR MAY NOT BE GOING WELL FOR THE EMPEROR, MY CAMPAIGN IS INFINITELY MORE SUCCESSFUL."

1945 AUGUST

"AND ENJOYABLE."

IN ALL THE CONFUSION AND DISTRACTION THROWN UP BY THIS CONFLICT, I AM ABLE TO SERVE MY MASTERS JOJORIN AND FUKUROKUJI WELL.

THESE GODS OF LONGEVITY HAVE PROMISED ME, SATO, INVINCIBILITY AND IMMORTALITY IF I QUENCH THEIR THIRST FOR SOULS.

INVINCIBILITY AND IMMORTALITY...

<POLICE! STOP OR I SHOOT!>

AAAAA

AAAAA

BLAM! BLAM!

HUH...

HUH...

"NUMBER FORTY-ONE ... THE POLICE HAD BEEN CLOSE BEFORE, BUT NEVER SO CLOSE AS THAT NIGHT. ONLY MY SUPERNATURAL POWERS SAVED ME. BUT THEN AGAIN ..."

"PERHAPS THE GODS ARE TRYING TO TELL ME SOMETHING."

"MAYBE IT IS TIME TO MOVE ON TO ANOTHER CITY... SOMEWHERE LARGER ... TOKYO."

"IN IT'S HUGE SPRAWL I WILL BE ABLE TO MOVE AROUND LIKE A SHADOW ASSASSIN, A PHANTOM."

"MY HEART WILL BEAT LIKE THE JOYOUS WINGS OF A HUMMING BIRD AS THE GUTTERS RUN RED WITH BLOOD."

"IF I HURRY, I COULD BE IN TOKYO TODAY..."

"I HAVE SUCKED THIS CITY DRY."

"THE CHILDREN OF HIROSHIMA HAVE MADE ME GREAT AND MIGHTY..."

"I AM INVINCIBLE!"

Enola Gay

What has gone before in

Jeff Nicholson's

LoST LauGh

Once upon a time there was a fantastic cartoon universe filled with many inhabited worlds, and an Earth much like our own. On that Earth, in the land of Japan, giant alien visitors heroically battled radioactive monsters and other threats. The first and most popular of these heroes was Sam Sogg, who the Japanese called Ultra Klutz. From yet another alien world came Argoll, Sam's arch foe. Also battling these aggressors were the Secret Suicide Squad, a Japanese para-military unit specializing in monster fighting. In the heavens, two comedic gods, Chaoz and Ordain, choreograph the players lives. It was a dangerous yet wondrous time, until suddenly, it stopped. The aliens and monsters vanished overnight, and the squad fell to useless public relations events and eventual disbandment.

"Lost Laughter is a phenomenon. It is a universal spiritual decay. Six years of time ticking sideways. Rules being broken, then glued back together with a sickly paste, leaving us unsure of God or Nature. Who will save us? Our heroes are quiet. Or sleeping. Or dead."

One quite hero, Hirobumi (formerly of the Suicide Squad), awoke six years after the disappearance of the heroes. His slumber was that of despair, with a menial job in a video rental store. Upon viewing the new "Death of Ultra Klutz" video, he snapped. This tape speculated on Sam's death in bleak, gruesome ways. No one seemed to remember the days of wonder, and Hirobumi went on a rampage, landing himself in a psychiatric hospital. A voice by the name of "Vince" began speaking to him, telling him of the Lost Laughter force he had been creating. Street gangs flourished in Tokyo, who were then crushed by the "Japanese Cowboy" movement: Former businessmen who took back the streets with rifles and six guns, dressed in Hollywood cowboy attire. Dogs and cats went wild, attacking their former masters.

Meanwhile, Sam, Argoll and the other aliens awoke and found themselves to be human. As it turned out, Chaoz and Ordain had put them in suspended animation for six years, although they were **not** responsible for turning them human. That was the work of this unseen Vince. The two gods feared him, and sent the aliens out on reconnaissance missions to gather more information.

Of considerable importance to this story is the relationship between Sam and Argoll. Once bitter enemies, they realized they were merely pawns of the gods and of the rulers of their respective worlds, and decided to call a truce. Both were less interested in petty rivalry and more so in understanding the true nature of the universe. In his youth, Sam had possessed knowledge of Alpha Centauri, an "off limits" world of nirvana. Those memories were stolen by one of Argoll's superiors, and Sam and Argoll were determined to get them back while searching for Vince for the gods.

Also on Vince's trail was the Secret Suicide Squad, who rescued Hirobumi and left Earth in search of this unwelcome creator of Lost Laughter ...

ChapTeR *fivE*:
OUT OF MIND

HELLO. MY NAME IS VINCE.
I FINALLY FIGURED IT OUT.
I'M GOD.

I'M NOT WHAT YA CALL EDUCATED,
BUT I HAVE POWER. SO MUCH POWER
THAT I DON'T *NEED* AN EDUCATION.
I DON'T KNOW WHY, BUT ALL THAT POWER
KINDA TEARS ME UP LIKE A BAD ULCER.
SO THE MORE CONFUSED I GET,
THE MORE PAIN I PASS ON TO YOU.
SEE? I'M GOD.

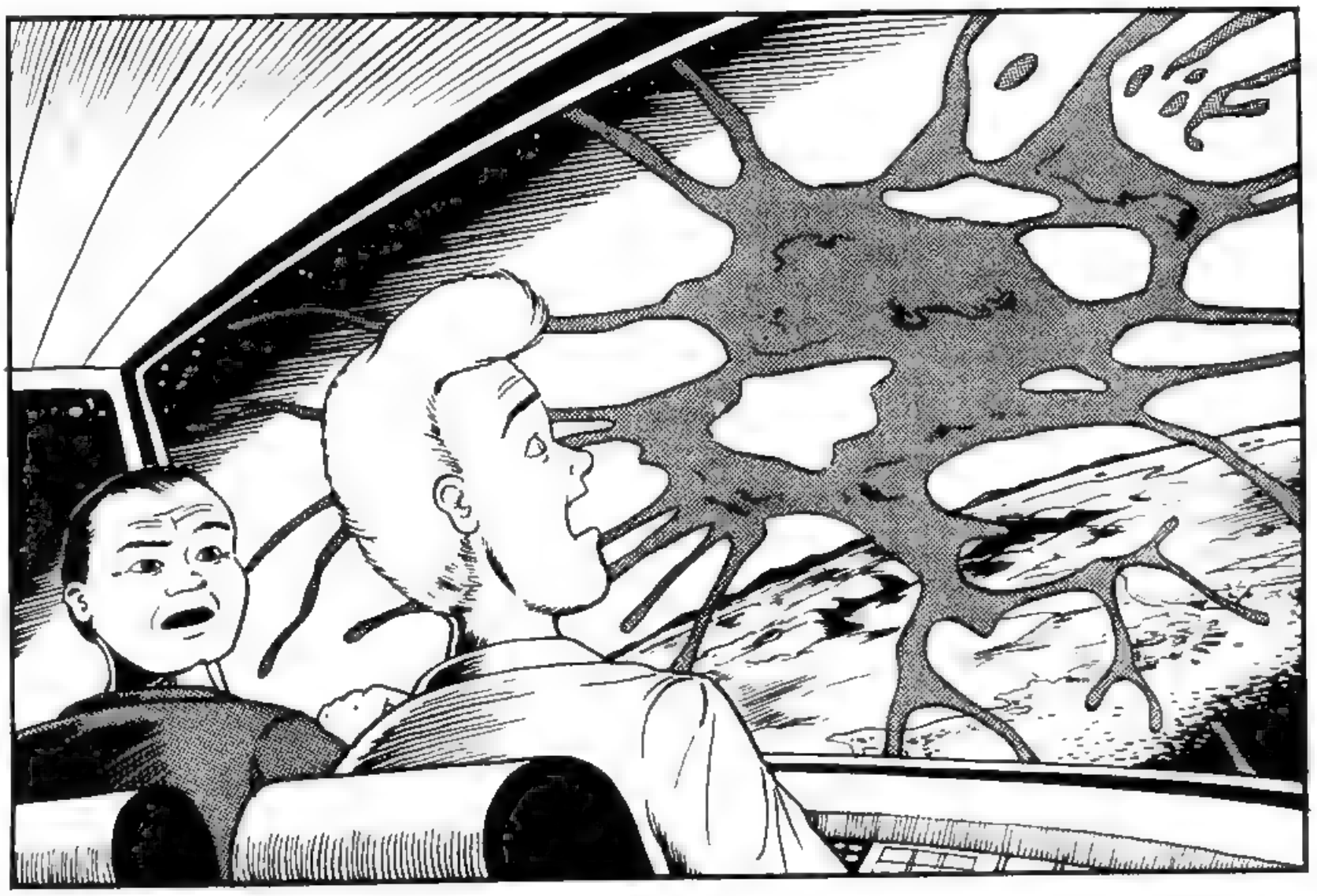
OWW. DAMN, THAT HURTS. IT'S LIKE
HEARTBURN OR A SICK HANGOVER.
I NEED SOMETHING TO FOCUS ON.
I NEED TO TALK TO YOU SOME MORE.
IT MAKES YOU FEEL RELIEF TO LISTEN,
TOO, DOESN'T IT?
I PROMISE I WON'T SPEAK IN RIDDLES.
THAT ISN'T WORKING ANYMORE.

IF I MAKE SOMETHING REALLY
HORRIBLE HAPPEN, I SETTLE
DOWN A BIT. THE MORE I
MAKE THE BETTER I GET.
IT'S LIKE I GOT ALL THESE LITTLE
THEATERS PLAYING ALL AROUND
ME. I CAN SEE ANY PART OF
THEM ANY TIME. A FAIR DE-
SCRIPTION OF GOD, AM I RIGHT?

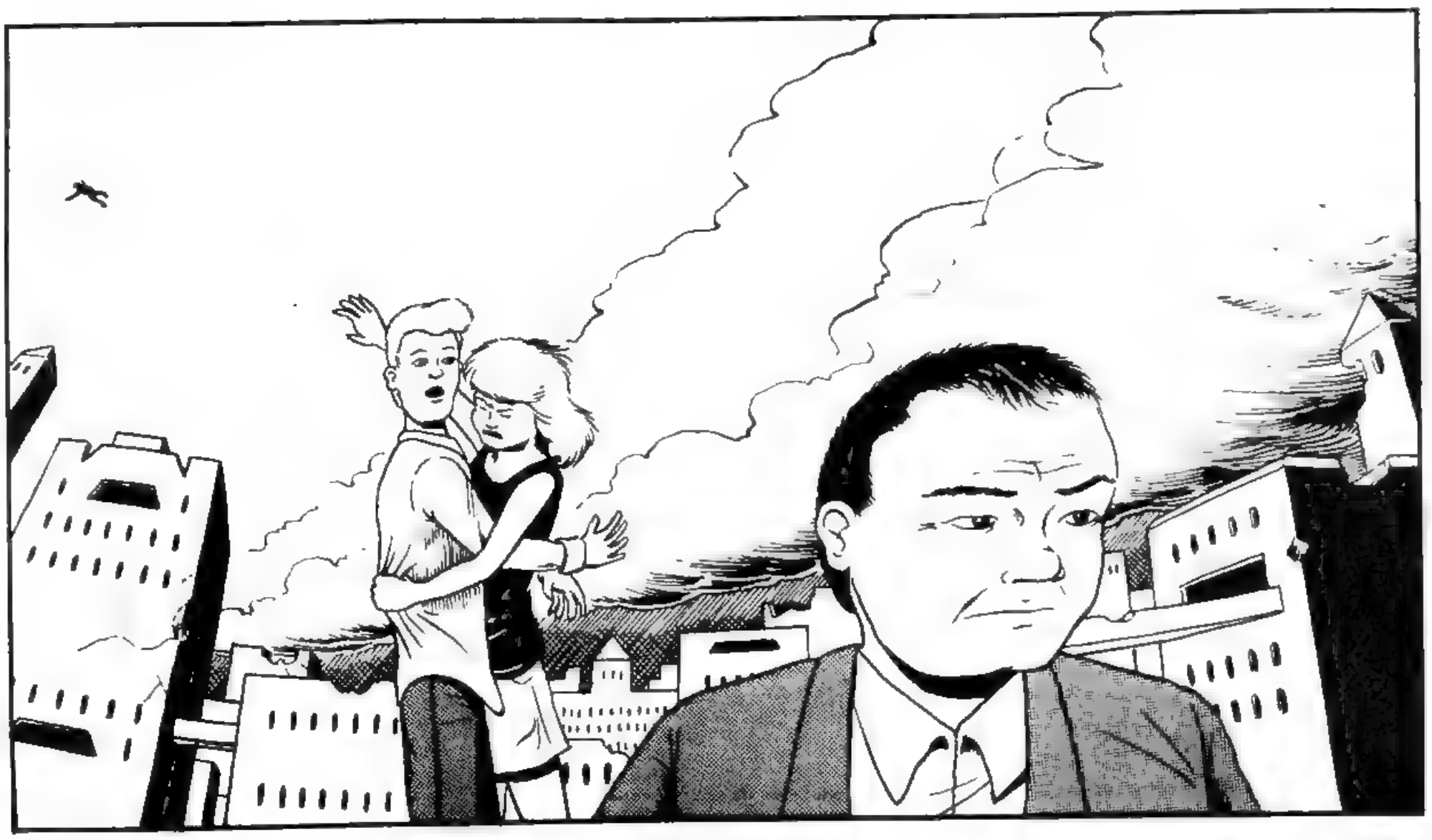
AND IT'S GETTING
INTERESTING.
ALL THESE CHARACTERS
FROM ALL DIFFERENT
WALKS O' LIFE ARE
LOOKIN' FOR ME NOW.
IT'S FUN WATCHIN' 'EM.
I SHOULD OPEN UP MY
OWN SALOON AND
HAVE 'EM ALL OVER
FOR A BEER. ON ME.

SAM AND ARGOLL ARE THESE TWO CHUMS, SEE? THEY KILLED EACH OTHER'S FAMILIES IN SOME FORGOTTEN WAR AND ALL THIS CRAZY STUFF AND NOW THEY'RE FRIENDS. DON'T THAT BEAT ALL? I HAD NUTTIN' TO DO WITH IT, I SWEAR.

ANYWAY, THEY'RE GOIN' TO ARGOLL'S HOME PLANET, RUST, TO GET, OF ALL THINGS, SAM'S BRAIN. SO PICTURE IT: THE PLANET'S ALMOST DESERTED (MOST EVERYONE MIGRATED OFF THE PLANET EXCEPT THESE RELIGIOUS FUNAMENALLISTS), AND SAM AND ARGOLL ARE FLYIN' INTO THE OUTER ATMOSPHERE. POW! SOMETHING EXPLODES AND THERE'S BLOOD ALL OVER THE SHIP'S WINDOW. HAH!



LATER, THEY'RE ON THE STREETS OF THE CAPITAL CITY. THEY'RE TALKIN' TO SOME LADY AND HER KID JUST GOES FLYIN' OUTTA HER ARMS. THE LADY FLIPS. GET IT? THAT WAS MY IDEA FOR THE PLANET RUST. PEOPLE BECOME UNAFFECTED BY GRAVITY AT RANDOM. WHEN THEY REACH HIGH ALTITUDE... POW! HAH!

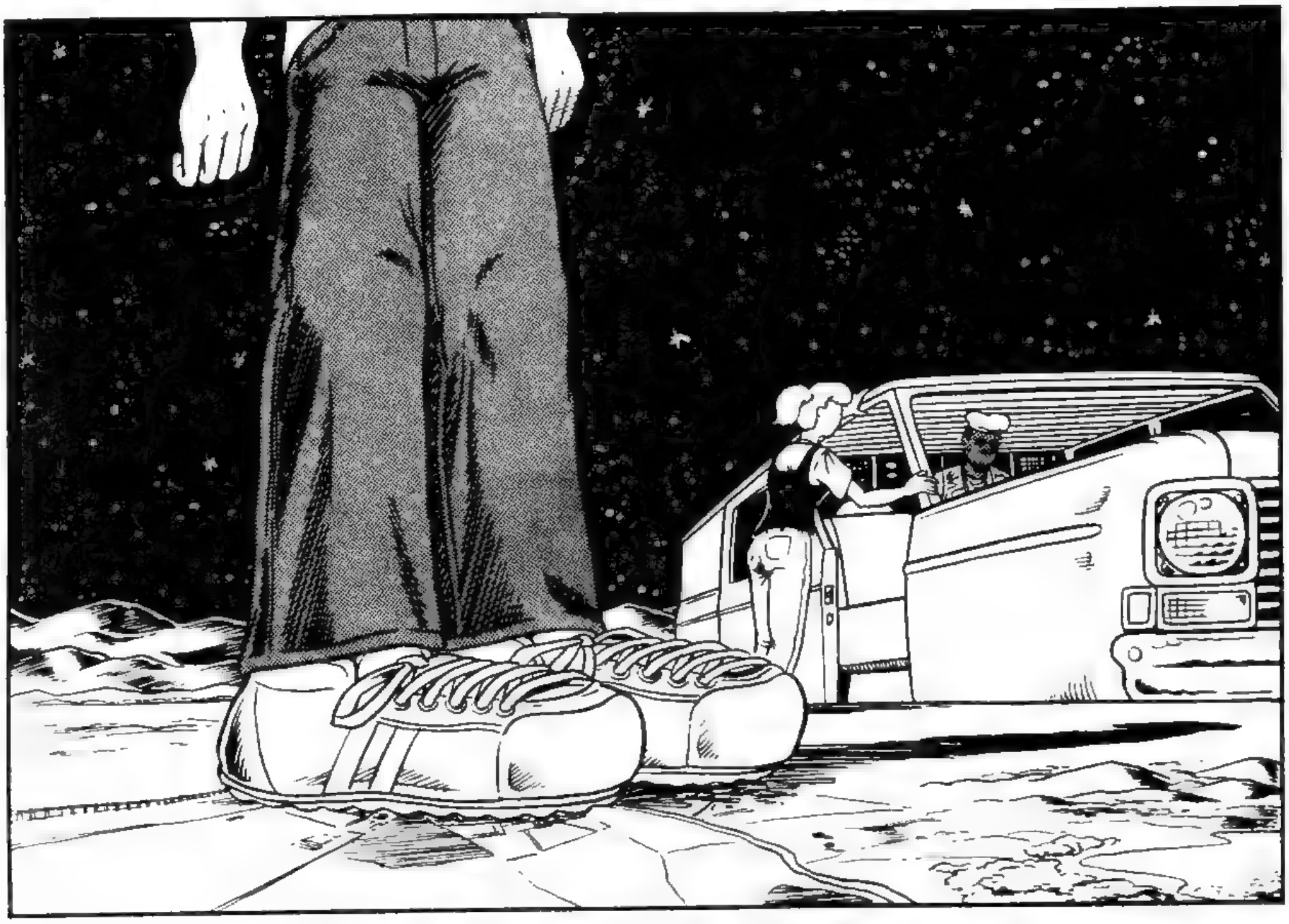


SAM AND ARGOLL START GETTIN' NERVOUS AND RUN INTO THE CHAMBERS OF THIS GUY CALLED THE ELDER RUSTIC. THE OLD MAN HAD BEEN STEALING THE MEMORIES OF POLITICAL ENEMIES FOR YEARS AND STORING THEM IN THESE WEIRD LIVING BRAINS. WHEN HE FINDS OUT HE'S GOT UNWANTED COMPANY, HE STARTS SMASHIN' 'EM IN DESPERATION. YUCK!

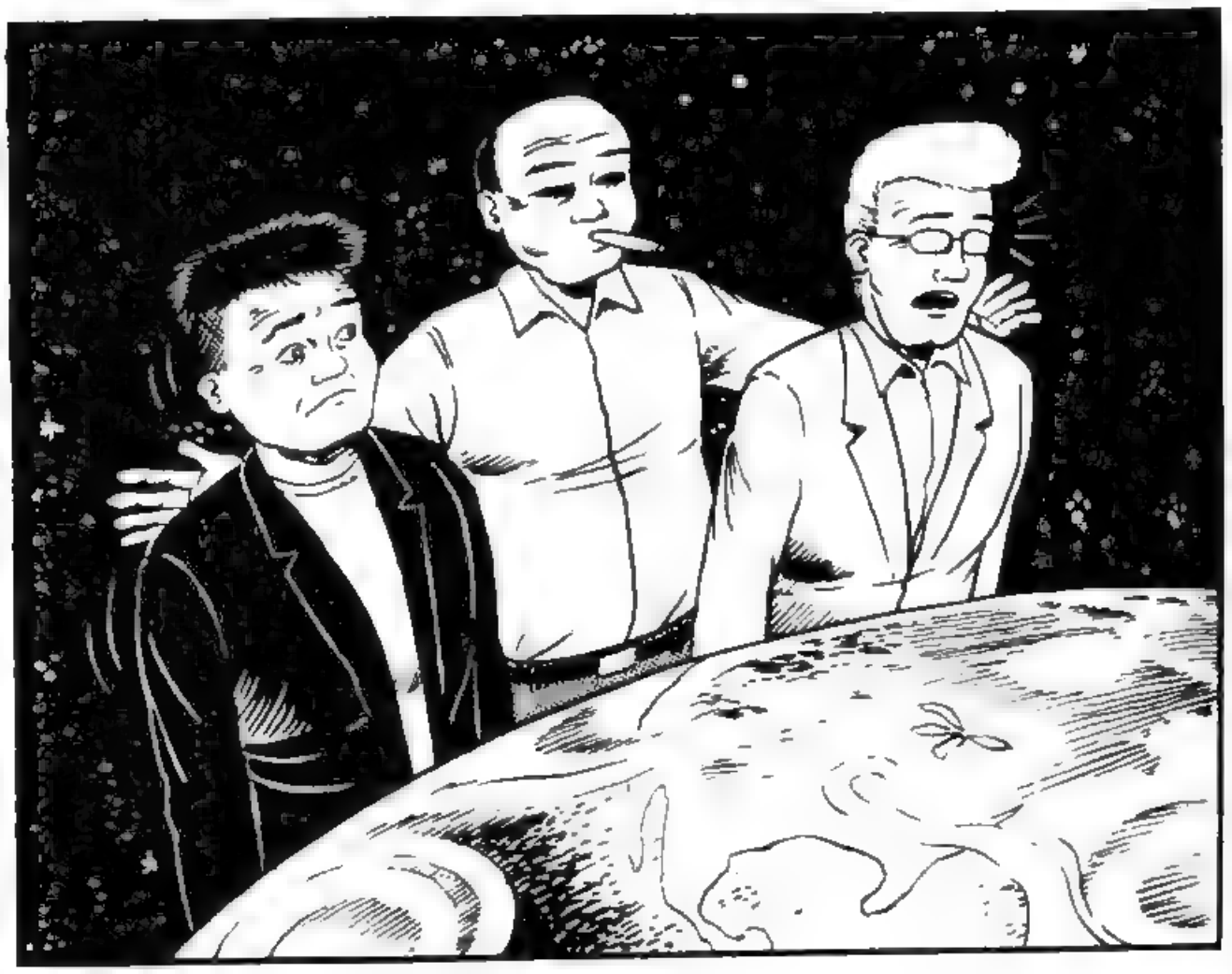
ARGOLL QUICKLY (AND GLADLY) PUTS THE OLD GUY OUTTA COMMISSION. THE OLD GUY HAD SERIOUSLY GYPPED ARGOLL AT SOME POINT IN THE PAST. THEY DECIDE THEY BETTER TAKE ALL THE BRAINS WITH 'EM AND FIGURE OUT WHICH ONE HAS SAM'S MEMORIES IN IT LATER. AND THEN (THIS IS GOOD) SAM SAYS, "WAIT." HE LOOKS SLOWLY AROUND THE ROOM, STOPS, AND SAYS, "THIS ONE." THE GUY JUST KNEW! IT WAS LIKE A REALLY GOOD SCENE IN A MOVIE.

I THINK THIS IS HELPING.
THIS IS REALLY DISTRACTING ME.
THE PAIN'S GONE WAY DOWN.
ARE YOU HANGIN' IN THERE WITH ME?
HERE'S A BRIEF STORY YOU
MIGHT FIND AMUSING.

REMEMBER HOW I SAID MOST OF THE RUSTICS LEFT THEIR HOMEWORLD? THEY WENT TO COLONIZE A NEW PLANET THEY CALLED "NEW RUST." THREE EX-FRIENDS OF SAM'S WENT THERE TO SNOOP AROUND. THEIR SENSORS TOLD THEM THE LOCATION OF THE COLONY, BUT WHEN THEY HOPPED OUT, NUTTIN'. THEY CHECK THE COMPUTERS AGAIN, WHILE THIS ONE GUY, JOE, PACES AROUND LIKE A MORON. HE HEARS THIS FUNNY, "CRUNCH," AND THERE GOES THE WHOLE COLONY, WHICH I HAD THAT MORNING ALTERED IN SCALE AND NEGLECTED TO TELL ANYONE.

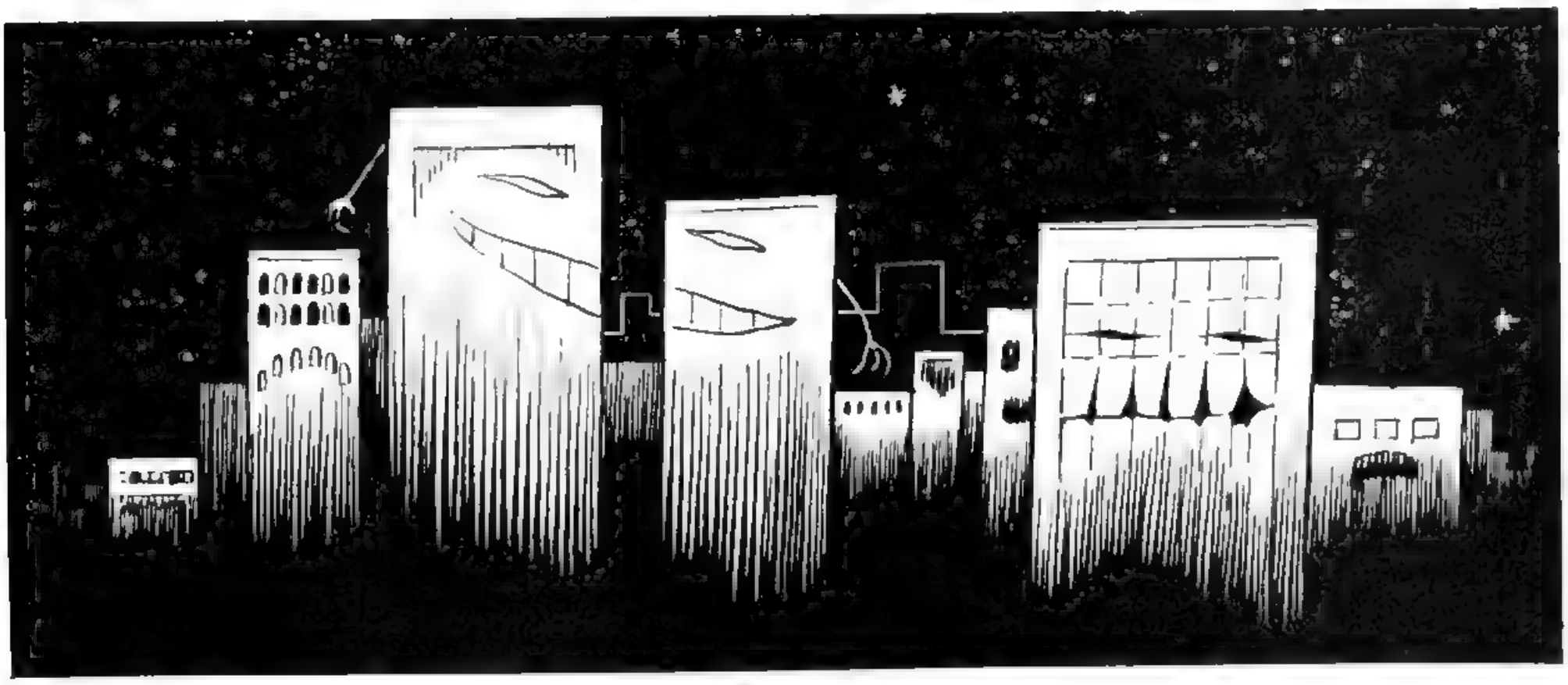


WHAT ABOUT EARTH?
YOUR PLANET, RIGHT?
I KNOW YOU'RE CURIOUS
ABOUT THAT ONE. OKAY.
THIS ONE'S A LITTLE
SHOWY I ADMIT. Y'SEE, I
HAD JUST MET THESE TWO
SO CALLED OTHER GODS,
CHAOZ AND ORDAIN. YOU
WOULDN'T BELIEVE HOW
NERVOUS THESE GUYS
WERE WHEN I WALKED UP
AND SLAPPED 'EM ON
THE BACK. THEY ABOUT
JUMPED OUTTA THEIR SKIN.



WE GOT TO TALKIN' AND THEY TRIED TO PUMP ME FOR INFO BUT I SKIRTED AROUND IT AND PUT ALL THE HEAT BACK ON THEM. THE ORDAIN GUY I UNDERSTAND. HE WANTS IT ALL ORDERLY. I'VE KNOWN GUYS LIKE THAT. BUT CHAOZ? OH, BROTHER. HE THINKS HE MAKES CHAOS. "WHAT CHAOS?," I SEZ. "I DON'T SEE IT." HE RETORTS, "I MADE MONSTERS. MUTATIONS FROM LIZARDS AND OTHER CREATURES." "LIZARDS?" I SEZ, "OH, BUDDY, I'LL SHOW YA SOME CHAOS." AND I TAKES MY CIGAR AND FLICK A BIG ASH ON THE PLANET.

IT DRIFTS DOWN AND WHEN IT HITS, *MY* CHAOS TAKES OVER. NO COUPLE OF LIZARDS. AN ENTIRE CITY BECOMES A MUTATION, AS HE CALLS IT. IT'S ALIVE, AND THE PEOPLE ARE INSIDE, GOIN' ABSOLUTELY NUTS.



SAM'S BROTHER AND SOME COPS AND A MAILMAN WENT TO ALPHA CENTAURI. I CAN'T HAVE ANY EFFECT ON THAT WORLD. I CAN'T EVEN VIEW IT. ORDAIN AND CHAOZ ARE WEAKER THAN ME UNLESS IT HAS TO DO WITH THAT WORLD. IT'S ORDAIN'S LITTLE PET. HE PROTECTS IT. THAT FRUSTRATES ME. I DON'T WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT ANY MORE. GOD, OVER AND OUT.

I THINK HE'S PULLING OUT.

VINCE...

HIROBUMI, DO YOU HEAR US?

DON'T RUSH HIM OUT OF IT.

OH, MAN. THAT WAS... THAT WAS...

WE WERE WORRIED. VINCE IS FEEDING YOU ANOTHER VISION?

NO. NOT A VISION. MORE. I MEAN... EVERYTHING. HE'S JUST TALKING TO ME CASUALLY NOW.

WHAT?

WHO IS HE? *WHAT* IS HE?

HE'S JUST SOME TWO-BIT WHITE GUY. BUT HE'S A GOD. SORT OF. HE'S MESSING EVERYTHING UP.

WHY? DOES HE WANT SOMETHING? WHAT ARE HIS MOTIVES?
DOES HE SAY WHAT WILL HAPPEN NEXT? I MEAN, THE WAY HE'S SINGLED YOU OUT AS A PROPHET, DOES HE WANT US TO MEET HIM OR PARTICIPATE IN SOME WAY?
I THINK SO.
CAPTAIN, DID YOU SHARE THE VISION?
NO, BUT LOOK.
Vince's PLACE
Vince's PLACE
PARKING

NEXT: VINCE'S PLACE

CLASSICS DESECRATED

"The Origin of The Legend of the Pied Piper"

Defiled by Doug Wheeler, Mark A. Lester & Ken Lester

ONCE UPON A TIME, THERE LIVED A SHOEMAKER AND HIS WIFE, WHO HAD THREE SMALL BOYS

THEY WERE REASONABLY WELL OFF, AND QUITE PROMINENT CITIZENS IN THEIR TOWN

ALL IN FACT WAS PERFECT, BUT FOR ONE TEENY-TINY PROBLEM

COBBLER

MARTHA, DEAR, I DO SO LOVE THE CHILDREN

BUT I MUST ADMIT I NEVER EXPECTED THAT SO MUCH OF OUR TIME TOGETHER WOULD BE TAKEN UP RAISING THEM

OH, THEY DO SO EXCEL AT THAT DON'T THEY?

YES, SO IF YOU WOULDN'T MIND, I WAS THINKING WE COULD JUST TAKE THEM OUT INTO THE WOODS ON A LITTLE TRIP TOMORROW

AND *LOSE* THEM.

WHAT??! HOW CAN YOU EVEN SUGGEST SUCH A THING?

I MEAN, WHAT WOULD THE NEIGHBORS THINK?

THE NEIGHBORS *WON'T* SAY A *WORD*. THEY'RE *ALL* DOING IT *THEMSELVES!* IT'S THE LATEST TREND--

--HAVEN'T YOU NOTICED HOW PEACEFUL AND QUIET THE TOWN HAS BEEN LATELY? HOW EMPTY THE PLAYGROUNDS ARE?

THE JOHNSONS TOOK LITTLE HANSEL AND GRETEL INTO THE WOODS A FEW DAYS AGO. THE SMITHS SOLD THEIR DAUGHTER TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD WITCH FOR A HEAD OF LETTUCE

EVERYONE IS DOING IT!

BUT, IT SEEMS SO DRASTIC!

LOOK, WOULDN'T YOU LIKE TO SEE AN ADULT MOVIE FOR A CHANGE?

WOULDN'T YOU LIKE TO GO OUT AND EAT SOMEWHERE OTHER THAN McDONALD'S?

WOULDN'T YOU LIKE TO COME HOME, AND FIND SOMETHING OTHER THAN *BARNEY* ON TV?

YOU'RE RIGHT WE *MUST* GET RID OF THEM!

AND SO, THE SHOEMAKER AND HIS WIFE RESOLVED TO BE FREE OF THEIR PLEASANT BUT INCONVENIENT BOYS THE NEXT MORNING .

COBBLER

. . AND, IN FACT, WOULD HAVE BEEN FINISHED WITH THE DEED

. HAD IT NOT BEEN FOR THE UNTIMELY ARRIVAL

OF A CENTRAL GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVE!

BYNG BNNG

IT HAS COME TO THE ATTENTION OF THE KING THAT AN INORDINATELY LARGE NUMBER OF CITIZENS OF THIS TOWN HAVE STOPPED PAYING THE HEAD TAX FOR THEIR CHILDREN

AS A MEMBER OF HIS MAJESTY'S CHILD WELFARE AGENCY, WHOSE TASK IT IS TO MAKE CERTAIN THAT ALL CHILDREN ***FARE WELL*** ENOUGH TO REACH ADULTHOOD, AND THUS BE ABLE TO PAY EVEN MORE TAXES .

I HAVE ONE VERY IMPORTANT QUESTION TO ASK YOU IN BEHALF OF THE KING--

--WHERE ARE YOUR CHILDREN??!

YE TAX LEDGER

WELL, THAT WAS NOT ALL THAT EASY A QUESTION TO ANSWER. NOT UNLESS THEY WISHED TO PART WITH THEIR HEADS.

AND SO, WHILE THEIR BRAIN-CASES WERE STILL ATTACHED TO THEIR BODIES, THEY THOUGHT AND THEY THOUGHT AND THEY THOUGHT AND THEY THOUGHT . .

. . UNTIL AT LENGTH THEIR SILENCE ACCUSED THEM

AND THEY BLURTED OUT THE BEST EXCUSES THEY COULD MUSTER

THEY WERE ABDUCTED BY THE DEVIL!

AND TURNED INTO MICE!

THAT'S RIGHT! WE DIDN'T TAKE THEM OUT IN THE WOODS AND LEAVE THEM TO DIE, OR ANYTHING LIKE THAT!

NO!
NO!
WE'D NEVER DO ANYTHING LIKE THAT!
HONEST!
AND WHAT, MAY I INQUIRE, HAPPENED TO THE MICE?
MR MAYOR?
UHM, WELL, THE DEVIL HE UH *GOT DRUNK!*
YEAH! REALLY PIE-PACED!
AND HE TOOK THE FORM OF *PAN* THE FLUTE-PLAYER!
COBBLER
AHEM *AND THEN?? . . .*
OH!! . . . UH AND THEN THE DEVIL
THE *PIED* PIPER!!
YES. HE . . . UH PLAYED HIS FLUTE, AND . . . UH . . .
AND ALL THE CHILDREN FOLLOWED HIM OUT OF TOWN!
YES!
YES!
THAT'S EXACTLY HOW IT HAPPENED!
WE WOULDN'T MAKE IT UP!
WE'D NEVER EVEN THINK OF SELLING OUR CHILDREN TO WITCHES!
OR WOLVES!
OR GIANTS!
OR MEDICAL EXPERIMENTS!

WELL, ALRIGHT, THEN . . .
A LOT OF EXACTLY THIS SORT OF THING HAS BEEN GOING AROUND LATELY.
WE JUST HAD TO MAKE CERTAIN THAT NOTHING SUSPECT WAS HAPPENING.

AND SO, WITH THE THREAT OF GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION DIMINISHED, THE TOWNSFOLK WERE ABLE TO RESUME THEIR QUAINT, COUNTRY LIFESTYLE
COME ALONG, CHILDREN! WE'RE GOING TO HAVE A PICNIC IN THE WOODS TODAY!
YAAY!!
AND ALL THE PARENTS LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER

TOWN TRAINS!

No, don't throw ANYTHING away! Those notes must be SOMEWHERE on my desk... YES, I'm wearing a scarf. Must go now~miss you, Liebschen!

1954 - ALBERT EINSTEIN, FATHER OF MODERN PHYSICS, IS APPROACHING THE END OF AN EXTRAORDINARY LIFE. HE HAS BEEN INVITED TO LECTURE AT THE PRESTIGIOUS GROVES INSTITUTE BY GRADUATE STUDENT LOUIS GOLDBERG.

Take der rest of der week off, Agent Johnson~tell Washington I'll send dem a postcard!

ADMIRING THE BOY'S NERVE, HE HAS ACCEPT
THIS WILL BE ONE OF THE LAST TIMES HE WIL
EVER SPEAK IN PUBLIC.
IT IS ALSO-

EINSTEIN'S LAST CASE

FRN PAC

"My friends. I have come here today to discuss something not on any syllabus."

"Responsibility".

"The duty of care we owe our fellow man and indeed our planet."

Ach, my good fellow I can PANTOMIME.

"The law tells us we must not drive our cars on the pavement or throw rocks from a window. But as Scientists we must look to our hearts for guidance."

And we must remember that however remote the consequences of our actions may seem ...

"They have a way of catching up with us."

PROFESSOR! PLEASE WAIT, - O'BRIEN, HEAD OF PHYSICS

COFF! COFF!

SORRY THERE WASN'T MORE OF A WELCOME, BUT THERE HAS BEEN A SLIGHT HITCH...

COFF! COFF! EXCUSE ME

NAME'S MAGGIN, HOMICIDE. SORRY to TELL YOU, PROF, BUT YOUR BOY GOLDBERG'S A MURDERER. Got 'IM DEAD to RIGHTS.

MURDERER? no, not a PHYSICIST!

COFF! COFF!

BLEW UP THE ENTIRE LABORATORY, AND the DOC'S deputy HARTMAN, TOO. CAUGHT GOLDBERG WITH THE PASS-KEY. NO ALIBI.

IN MY DAY, IT WAS GODDAM FIRECRACKERS ..

GOLDBERG HAD IT ALL, Method, MEANS, OPPURTUNITY. **AND MOTIVE.** HAD A BEEF with HARTMAN OVER SOME RESEARCH THEY'D BEEN DOING - CLAIMED HARTMAN TOOK ALL THE CREDIT.

He SWAPPED the LABELS ON A COUPLE OF JARS. INSTANT NITRO the DOC TELLS ME.

HARTMAN WAS WORKING LATE LAST NIGHT. MUST'VE MIXED 'EM UP AND **KABOOM!** POOR STIFF. We found THE KEY IN GOLDBERG'S ROOM. END of STORY.

POOR, POOR LOUIS-

May I see Mr. Goldberg? Talk to him?

SEEING AS YOU'VE COME ALL THIS WAY, PROF...

I DIDN'T DO IT, SIR. YOU MUST BELIEVE ME. I'VE HAD THE KEY FOR MONTHS - I MUST HAVE FORGOTTEN, AND NO-ONE ASKED AFTER IT - WHAT AM I GOING TO DO?

Don't trouble yourself, Louis. God might not play dice mit der Universe, but I can play a liddle CLUEDO, hein? I'll do everything in my power.

Tell me - who else would want to kill the mysterious Mr. Hartman?

I'd SAY MEAT BUCHINSKY AND MRS. H., both FOR THE SAME REASON. HARTMAN WAS A WOMANISER. ALWAYS CHASING SKIRT AND CATCHING IT. INCLUDING MEAT'S GIRLFRIEND. SHE WAS ONLY 19, SEE, But it Got Hushed up.

Got transfe... SOME PLACE O... WEST.

AN' MEAT AIN'T EXACTLY THE FORGIVING KIND.

THERE WAS AN EARLIER EXPLOSION IN THE SAME LAB SIX MONTHS AGO, THE DOC AND HARTMAN Got ... OUT UNHURT. LUCKY FOR THE DOC - HE RETIR... REAL SOON. FIGURE IT HAD TO BE THE KID Both TIMES. DON'T do ANYTHING, AH—

Stupid?

right.

EARLY THE NEXT MORNING

Meat Buchinsky? MAC DONALDS, Varsity Sport. I wonder if I could have a liddle word?

YuhNNGGGHHH!

Training must be hard for you mit all der ups und downs lately?

50

mean hartman?... Sorry he dead .. wanted to see him Squirm...

rend his flesh...

-GOUGE-

-PULP-

KILL!!!

Gulp

USE A LIFT, "MAC"?

FIGURES YOU HADDA do SOMETHING. WANT ME TO ARREST THE CRIMINAL GENIUS NOW?

BP 30

Tch, I should have listened to you. Der Schlemiel wouldn't know H2O from H2SO4...

Find der pattern, und der rest will follow. Order from chaos. But how?

I'm GONNA REGRET this, But NEXT stop—

MRS. HARTMAN.

It has been a pleasure to have made your acquaintance, My dear. I insist you visit when things are more, uh, SETTLED.

HA, HA, I MIGHT JUST TAKE YOU UP ON THAT. GOODBYE, GENTLEMEN

THE WOMAN'S A GoddAM SAINT, I TELL You. I KNOW it WAS PHYSICALLY IMPOSSIBLE FOR HER to do it, but I ALMOST WISH SHE HAD KILLED THE KAFF

KAFF

KAFF

IF YOU HAVE ANY PROBLEMS, PROFESSOR..

So MUCH FOR Madison Avenue- THESE THINGS CAN'T BE Good FOR YA!

My dear lady, if your filing system proves too intellectually taxing for me, rest assured I will be in touch; a pleasant evening to you!

Ja, Ja, I have it! The records office, if you please, und hurry - Goldberg's future depends upon it!

DR. JULIUS O'BRIEN
PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL

Ach, Feynman, Feynman... you taught me too well!

I Know it's cancer, Doctor. Probably from exposure to Benzene Vapour?

The first explosion wasn't a murder attempt at all was it?

N-NO.

HARTMAN'S MIND WAS ON OTHER THINGS THAT EVENING. GOLDBERG'S ROYALTIES. THAT THYROID CASE BUCHINSKY. WOMEN. I WAS MURDERED-KILLED BY HIS ROVING DICK! IT WAS A SIMPLE ENOUGH MISTAKE, AND GOD KNOWS, I MADE ALLOWANCES FOR MILES' PROBLEMS. BUT WHEN I KNEW I WAS DYING —

I NEVER MEANT LOUIS TO BE IMPLICATED I TRULY DON'T KNOW IF I WOULD HAVE COME FORWARD, BUT I LIKE TO THINK SO.

COFF IT'S ALL, HAH, ACADEMIC, ISN'T IT?

THE FUNNIEST THING OF ALL, PROFESSOR, IS THAT I'VE BEEN MORE ALIVE THESE LAST FEW DAYS THAN I HAVE BEEN IN YEARS!

COFF! COFF!

MAY I HAVE A FEW MOMENTS TO COMPOSE MYSELF?

BLAM

CAME AS SOON AS I COULD, PROF-

T. OBRIE HEAD OF PHYSICS

CONGRATULATIONS, ACE.

You Just Solved Your First Murde

five minutes, professor.

Yes, thank you.

oh.

UNIFIED FIELD THEORY

Und ultimately, UE must come to terms mit our discoveries.

"Because UE have to live with them."

SCRIPT © 1990 - DAVID JACKSON.

ILLUSRATIONS © 1993 - PHIL WAGSTAFF

Bad Vibe in Suck Town

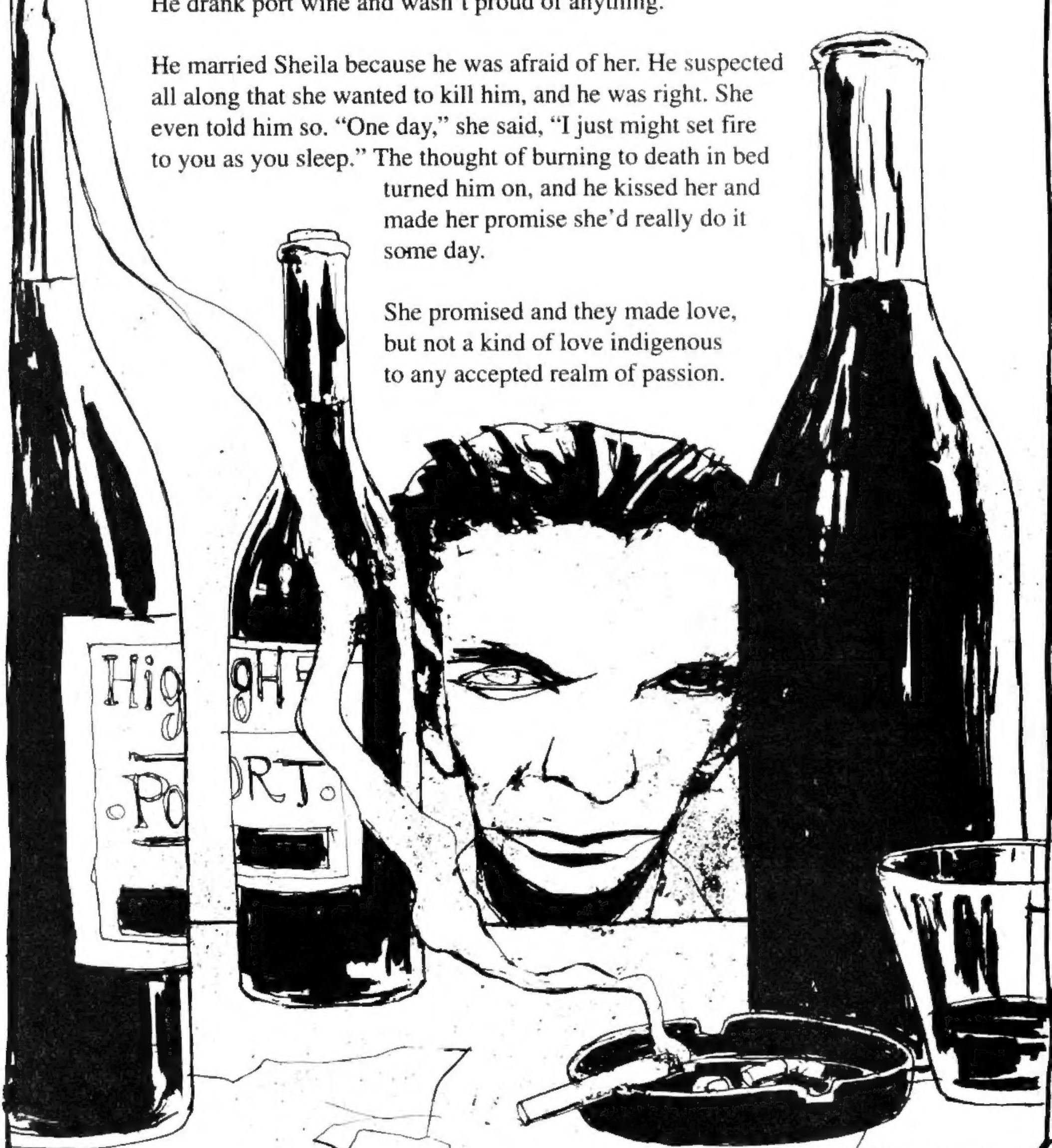
He was an ugly man with an ugly head and too many things to wear. His heart was abnormal—something to do with glands— and when he spoke his words were mean and sharp with regret.

He liked to break things, and he enjoyed watching other people break things as well. When there was nothing to break, he made lists in his head of things he'd break someday.

He drank port wine and wasn't proud of anything.

He married Sheila because he was afraid of her. He suspected all along that she wanted to kill him, and he was right. She even told him so. "One day," she said, "I just might set fire to you as you sleep." The thought of burning to death in bed turned him on, and he kissed her and made her promise she'd really do it some day.

She promised and they made love, but not a kind of love indigenous to any accepted realm of passion.



He awoke the next morning, horny and damned and certain there was nothing to eat but food. He wanted to break something, but everything within reach was either too soft, or broken already. He smoked instead.

Sheila was a typist. Sheila was off somewhere typing. Tonight, perhaps, she'd murder him. Probably not, but maybe.

He didn't have a job and didn't want one because then he'd have to go to it.

He liked the park and spent lots of time there.

He liked the pigeons because they made such a mess.

He imagined how swell it would be shitting on people from fifty, one-hundred feet up.

The sound. The mess. The sound.

The park was quiet.

He abhorred the quiet and everything it stood for.

If he was lucky enough to be murdered that night, he hoped Sheila would be loud. Typing was loud. Typing was good.

If he ever got a job he'd be a typist, and he'd never go to work.

She came home mad, an excellent sign.

"Somebody parked in my space again."

She was good at night, mad as hell, ready to fight.

He thought about hitting her, but kissed her instead.

"I hate what you're wearing," she said. "You dress like a blind man with no friends.

"I wore this for you," he said. "I have a bad heart."

"My mother says you're poison."

"Your mother bought me this shirt."

He kissed her on the teeth and she felt happy and violated. "I' m going to find out who stole my space today, and I'm going to kiss the sonofabitch on the mouth and pretend it's you."

Three months passed and as always, it was winter. He'd given up the hope of being murdered. When he'd bring it up she'd laugh and say *don't you wish!*

The mornings were cold and threatening and hellish blue. The park was quieter than ever, and he decided that when he died he didn't want to be buried in a cemetery.
Freeway would be good. Airport. Train tracks.

Sheila fucked him every night, but he could tell she never came, and when she did she WASTHINKINGOFTYPING.
He felt lucky to have her, though at times he never wanted to see her again. Maybe just her shoes, her fingernails, appendix scar.
He came, then went to sleep and dreamed of breaking Sheila's typewriter into a thousand pieces of sex.

"I'm leaving you," he said next morning as she dressed. "When you come home I'll be gone and you'll hate yourself for not killing me when you had the chance. I'll be haunted by the irony of it all, but I'll get a job to help me forget. Maybe I'll get a job as a typist. Maybe I'll work at your office and sit next to you, typing."

Zinkoff 94

"I won't miss you," she told him. "I'll forget you in time for the Six O'Clock news. I'll watch the top story and think to myself, hmmm, yeah, I'm over him already. Then I'll do a crossword puzzle and write your name as the answer to every clue. I'll bathe and forget you again and again, and when the phone rings I'll pick it up only after it stops. I'll burn all my mail and I'll talk about you to total strangers. I'll phone the police, and when they come I'll deny everything. I'll live better without you. I'll be madder and better than ever."

"All I wanted was the death you promised me, but you could never be that intimate, and now I have to live with it."

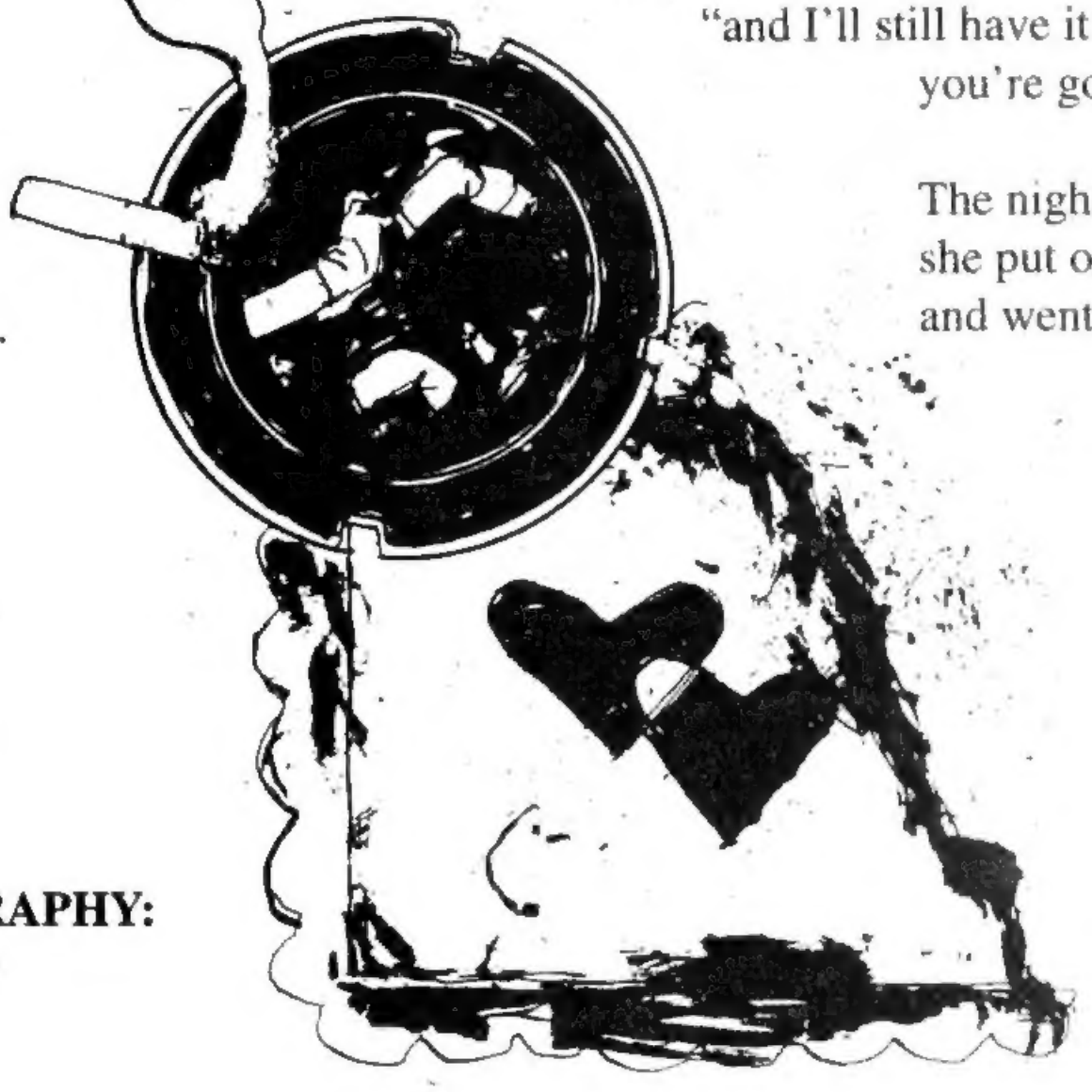
"I thought you knew me better than that. You're a child. Someone should adopt you and love you and give you sweet things and shoes. Someone should dress you like I never could."

"All in all it's been fun," he declared, "and I'll always say I love you. I'll tell other women I love you. Women in bars. Women in trucks. They'll think about you, these women will, and form beautiful pictures in their minds. You'll be typing and strange women will be thinking you look like Elizabeth Taylor. I'll tell them about the car in your space, and I'll say you never kissed me. But I won't mention your typing, and I won't talk about your promises of murder. Have a good day at work."

He had an unsettling way of smirking when he wished someone well, like a buzzard asking for a wine list.

"I'll have a good day," she replied, "and I'll still have it long after you're gone."

The night he left her, she put on an ugly dress and went dancing.



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